

FITNESS

Tips for Safety Smarts at the Gym

Do know your health risk.

Particularly if you're over 50, it's a good idea to visit your doctor before starting or intensifying a fitness routine. If you have elevated blood pressure, hypertension or heart problems, you may be taking unnecessary risks. A health professional or fitness expert can help you design a program that suits your needs and abilities.

Don't skip stretching

Fitting exercise into a busy day means it's tempting to skip stretches and move right into the "real" workout. But that's dangerous. Furthermore, new research shows that stretching after exercise also offers important benefits, like reducing muscle soreness and improving recovery. Hold each stretch for 10 to 20 seconds, without pain. If it hurts, you're stretching too far.

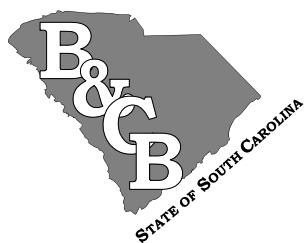
Do work with a trainer

The most common problem seen in gyms occurs when people attempt to perform an exercise without proper guidance or a balanced approach. Professional fitness trainers can provide valuable assistance. Most gyms provide between one and three complimentary sessions with a trainer, so take advantage of them. Remember that incorrect technique can hurt you. It is important to make sure the professional fitness trainer has received proper training and is certified.

Don't overdo it

People who push too hard and too much often end up quitting for weeks because they get hurt or discouraged. Work out at a moderate intensity for at least two to three months before attempting higher-intensity exercise. A higher-intensity workout, however, should also be painless. To get the benefits of exercise, you don't have to push yourself to extremes.

Source: The American Institute for Cancer Research



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